



Does Arkansas Need Passenger Rail?



Arkansas Rail Service Today



Amtrak *Texas Eagle*

Daily Service to

- Chicago
- Dallas
- San Antonio

Arkansas Stations

- Walnut Ridge
- Little Rock
- Malvern (Hot Springs)
- Arkadelphia
- Texarkana

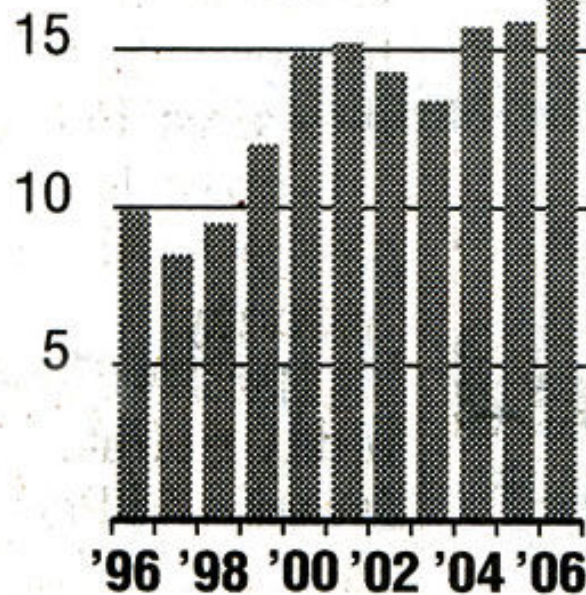
The *Texas Eagle* route ties urban and rural areas together, while connecting Arkansas to the national passenger train network.

Will the traveling public ride passenger trains?

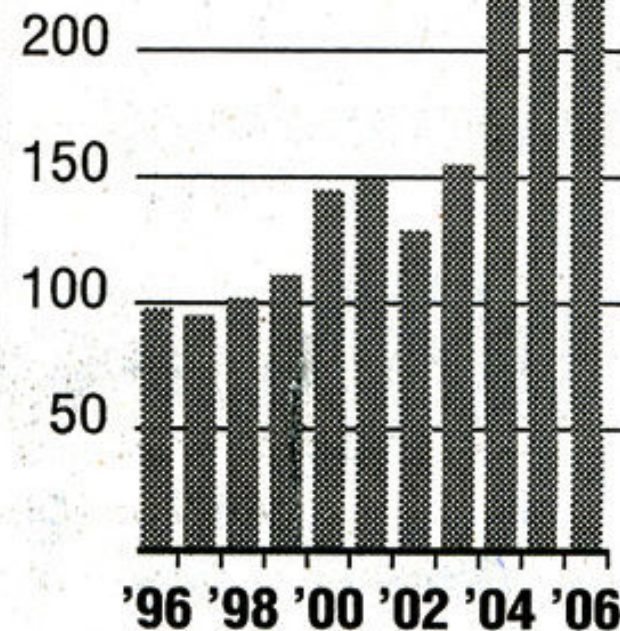
Texas Eagle performance

The local revenue management team has managed the Texas Eagle route since August 1999, with success.

Ticket revenue
\$16.8 million



Ridership
233,000



SOURCE: Amtrak

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

Published August 30, 2007



***Texas Eagle* ridership
increased 138%
from 1996 to 2006**

This impressive ridership growth occurred in a very challenging environment, with recurring problems caused by freight train congestion, excessively slow schedules, passenger car equipment shortages, and chronic Amtrak funding shortfalls.

Imagine the growth potential if the service had been provided by dependable, fast passenger trains operating on a convenient schedule.

Future Ridership Growth will require:

- **Reliable, on-time operation, on schedules which are at least competitive with highway drive times**
- **Additional cars to handle heavy demand during peak travel periods when the *Texas Eagle* now sells out**
- **An expanded route to serve additional destinations**
- **Increased frequency of operation to provide a more marketable choice of scheduled departure times**

The Arkansas connection...

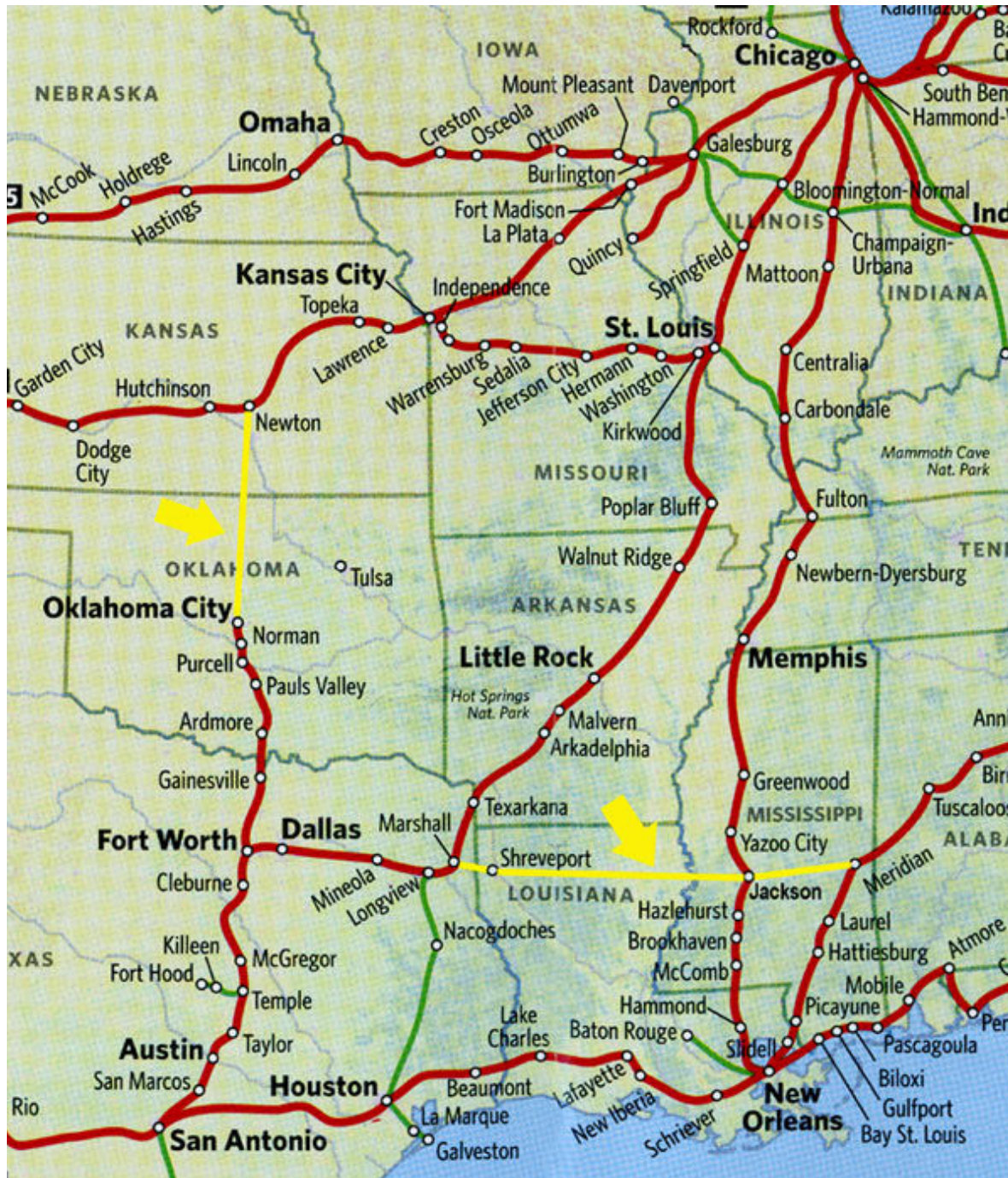
- A political commitment by Arkansas elected officials to support existing *Texas Eagle* service, thus protecting the route franchise for the future
- Comprehensive passenger rail planning in anticipation of federal legislation which will provide matching funds for expansion of higher speed passenger rail service

Other options ?

- Highway expansion is expensive, disruptive, and cannot keep up with constantly expanding traffic volume. Gasoline prices will continue to climb.
- Flying has become increasingly unpleasant due to congestion and security requirements.
- Rail provides an additional travel choice which can be attractive to people of all ages.
- Failure to provide the rail option is a 'de facto' policy decision to condemn our citizens to eternal road congestion.

States for Passenger Rail Coalition

- An alliance that supports intercity rail passenger initiatives and advocates for federal funding
- Membership limited to state transportation officials (www.s4prc.org)
- 31 states now participate, including all states surrounding Arkansas (except Texas)



Nearby Passenger Rail Initiatives

- State of Kansas has requested feasibility study for service between Kansas City and Oklahoma City
- Service being planned from Dallas through north Louisiana would provide an east coast connection from Texas
- In the absence of any Arkansas interest, Amtrak's scarce resources could be reallocated from Arkansas to other routes



Worst Case Scenario...

- Texas Eagle service rerouted over a more circuitous route between Chicago and Texas.

All Passenger train service discontinued to:

- Poplar Bluff, MO
- Walnut Ridge, AR
- Little Rock, AR
- Malvern (Hot Springs), AR
- Arkadelphia, AR
- Texarkana, AR

Arkansas – worst case scenario

- Growth of passenger rail in states surrounding Arkansas is both **GOOD** and **INEVITABLE**, given the present congestion facing both aviation and highways.
- If surrounding states are in a "growth" mode while Arkansas remains in "neutral", the end result could well be reallocation of scarce resources to those states where interest is greater.
- Discontinuance of Arkansas passenger train service might seem far fetched, but our state faced loss of all service in 1979 and again in 1997. The Arkansas and Texas congressional delegations and other elected officials intervened to preserve *Texas Eagle* service, the most direct Chicago-Texas route.
- Loss of existing *Texas Eagle* service would preclude the development of future higher speed passenger rail service; expanding rail corridors generally occur along existing Amtrak routes.

Arkansas – best case scenario

- **Arkansas joins forces with Texas to begin development of higher speed rail passenger service on the South-Central Corridor**
- **Arkansas Highway & Transportation Department or another state entity joins States for Passenger Rail Coalition so that Arkansas is represented on future advocacy decisions involving federal funding**
- **State and local leaders work with Arkansas congressional delegation to get Federal Railroad Administration high speed rail designation extended from Little Rock to Memphis, thus paralleling our most congested Interstate highways**
- **Funding requests for Memphis-Little Rock-Texarkana engineering studies are submitted, matching efforts of East Texas Corridor council for Texarkana-Dallas segment**

South Central Corridor

Cooperative Development -- Arkansas and east Texas



High Speed Passenger Rail in Arkansas ?

- **High Speed Rail will affect cities along the railroad much as the Interstate Highway system affected cities along Interstate routes in the 1960s – creating jobs and promoting economic growth.**
- **High speed passenger rail development is inevitable in the United States, benefiting many areas outside the traditional high-population areas of the Northeast or the West Coast.**
- **The question becomes one of whether Arkansas will participate in this important transportation and economic growth pattern, or whether we will watch from the sidelines as other states reap the benefits of passenger rail development.**

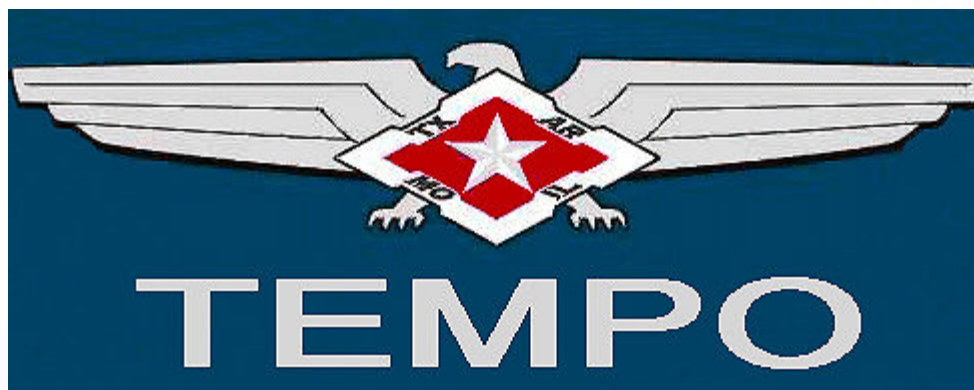
Does Arkansas Need Passenger Rail?

**Yes! New service would improve mobility,
create jobs and stimulate economic growth.**



Prepared by

Texas Eagle Marketing & Performance Organization



www.tempo-rail.org

bpollard@texaseagle.com